

catastrophic disasters, whether natural or from a terrorist attack. Congress owes it to our constituents and to our first responders to be more thoughtful in how we provide the resources necessary to improve our ability to detect, and respond to threats facing our Nation.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today the Senate passed the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill conference report. The bill provides \$30.8 billion in discretionary spending for the Department of Homeland Security. While it is important that the Senate acted to pass this legislation, I am concerned about the funding levels provided for critical programs in this conference report. Specifically, the bill cuts funding for vital first-responders grants, and fails to improve our Nation's transit and aviation security.

I fear that we have failed to learn from the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London about the vulnerability of our transit system. Yesterday's terrorist threat against the New York City transit system further illustrates the need to increase our efforts in this area. Yet the conference report that we passed today includes only \$150 million for transit security grants. In June, Senators SHELBY and SARBANES and I sponsored an amendment to raise funding for transit security to more than \$1 billion. Unfortunately, the amendment failed. But it is this level of funding, not \$150 million, that is necessary to keep the Nation safe.

Every workday, 14 million Americans take a train or a bus. We know that transit systems and their riders are by their very nature prime terrorist targets. Subways, light rail, buses, and ferries are designed for easy access and to move large numbers of people efficiently.

These are the facts: Numerous attacks on transit; 6,000 transit systems in the U.S.; and 14 million riders every workday. I don't think anyone can say transit is not a target for terrorists and should not be among our highest homeland security priorities. Yet the Federal Government's response to these facts has been underwhelming. Indeed, the Federal Government has invested \$9 in aviation security improvements per passenger, but only \$0.006 in public transportation security per passenger. Now, are aviation and transit the same and can we achieve the same level of security in the open access environment of transit? No, but I doubt that the 14 million Americans who use transit every workday think that less than one cent is the appropriate amount to invest in transit security.

Second, I am concerned about the cuts that the bill provides to aviation screening. The bill would cut funding for the aviation security screener workforce by \$125 million from the budget request. This cut will result in 2,000 fewer airport screeners nationwide, including cuts in the number of screeners in Rhode Island. Rather than cutting the number of screeners, we

need to increase the nationwide number to 53,000 screeners in order to keep wait times at the current average of about 10 minutes. Yesterday, President Bush in an attempt to rally public support for the war in Iraq stated that the Government disrupted 10 serious terrorist plots since September 11, 2001. Three of these plots involved hijacking airplanes for suicide attacks. Yet, today, the Republican Congress cut the number of screeners serving our airports.

Finally, the bill cuts funding for first-responder grants for States and local governments by about 17 percent, \$680 billion less than last year, and failed to include a formula to help ensure all states would receive adequate funding and protection.

This conference report does not do enough to protect Americans from terrorism threats or natural disasters. This is a continuation of the administration's, and the leadership of this Congress, pattern of failure to learn from past lessons and invest in the essential infrastructure necessary to make our country safe. Is this the type of belt-tightening the administration is willing to accept in order to continue to pay for irresponsible tax cuts?

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President. I rise today to express my displeasure with the Homeland Security appropriations conference report. More specifically, the conferees' neglect of formula based funding for State's first responders could produce dire results for small rural States such as Arkansas.

The conferees' decision to cut this funding, by more than half, will make it harder for smaller States to prevent, and more importantly, respond to emergency situations either manmade or natural. The events of the last 2 months alone go to show that first responders need to be prepared regardless of where they are located geographically.

The conferees' decision to cut first responder funding is even more frustrating seeing that the U.S. Senate a few months ago overwhelmingly passed a Homeland Security appropriations bill that went to great lengths to maintain a minimum base of first responder funding for all States. The formula which was created by Senators SUSAN COLLINS and JOSEPH LIEBERMAN was fair and would have provided stability to our Homeland Security appropriations process. I commend these Senators for their hard work and regret that their formula was ignored by conferees.

The conferees' actions will not only do great disservice to small States' first responders this year, but they have guaranteed that we will yet again spend precious time next year working out a funding formula to allocate Homeland Security grant money. There are many other issues that we must tackle but an inability to reach an understanding on this important issue will keep us stuck in the mud and that, Mr. President, is a disservice to all States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does any other Member seek recognition?

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I yield back time on our side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time having been yielded, the question is on agreeing to the conference report.

The conference report was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RELIEF FOR THE GULF COAST

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, there has been a lot of activity on the floor over the last 24 hours. It has been focused on how best to help the people along the gulf coast who have been devastated by twin natural disasters, Katrina and Rita. There has been an ongoing debate that took up the night here in trying to determine how best to provide the funding that the cities and parishes in Louisiana and in Mississippi and Alabama and Texas need in order to begin to deal with their pressing, urgent needs.

I rise because I well remember the feelings that I had on this floor in the aftermath of the attacks we suffered on September 11, 2001. It was an uncertain and tragic time in our country. We were attacked and we lost nearly 3,000 people. Eighteen acres were destroyed in the heart of the financial capital of the world. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs. Businesses were shuttered, and there was great doubt as to how we were going to obtain the resources to begin the recovery process.

I am grateful that in New York's hour of need, we had strong support in this Chamber. I am looking at my dear friend, the senior Senator from West Virginia, who came to our aid immediately. In fact, he said he would be the third Senator from New York.

Mr. BYRD. Yes.

Mrs. CLINTON. I have never forgotten that. I am so grateful because he helped to shepherd through the Congress the money that New York needed immediately to meet its needs.

I am someone who believes that in a time of natural or manmade disaster, Americans rally around each other. We